

PRESS RELEASE

Fiona Banner

FONT

18 September – 31 October 2015

This press release is typeset in a new font designed by Fiona Banner, titled *Font*. Banner's font is an amalgamation of typefaces she has worked with previously, through full stop sculptures and typeset and published works:

It's a family tree arrangement where the child of Avant Garde and Courier mates with Peanuts and Didot's child. Bookman and Onyx mate; their child mates with Capitalist and Klang's offspring - the final font is an unpredictable bastardisation of styles and behaviours. – Fiona Banner

Font was conceived during the artist's attempt to survey her practice, in preparation for this exhibition and her first survey exhibition, forthcoming at Ikon, Birmingham. She deploys it as the house font for the Ikon exhibition and it appears here, forming a link between the two.

The attempt to survey is also a theme in Banner's new film *Phantom* which features the artist's most recent publication; an illustrated reprint of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. In this film a Phantom drone camera simultaneously observes and harries the book like a hawk chasing down its prey. As the drone attempts to focus on the text and images, the downdraught from its rotor blades animates the pages and causes the book to flee before it. The publication under scrutiny takes the form of a glossy magazine bringing to mind notions of luxury and desire. Here the text is paired with images of the City of London which Banner commissioned from Magnum conflict photographer Paolo Pellegrin. The book also contains Banner's drawings depicting close-ups of pinstripe, a play on the livery and camouflage of the Square Mile.

Phantom is projected above an elongated structure which runs almost the full length of the gallery. Entitled *SS16* this piece evokes the architecture of fashion shows. Here the catwalk provides the stage for a graphite drawing in the form of an ornate pinstripe pattern.

Pinstripe also adorns the sculpture *Nose Art*. Here two Harrier Jump-Jet nose cones fixed high on the wall are covered in graphite pinstripe. The term 'Nose Art' refers to a military form of folk art, where aircraft are graffitied with popular cultural icons. Banner sees the nose cone as the most heroic part of an aircraft, and in this piece they are reminiscent of hunting trophies or breasts.

Nose to Nose depicts two fan-operated windsocks rising and falling in a heated discourse with one another. They become expressive characters communicating via a strangely emotional semaphore within the very gallery space where the film is shown.

In *Agent Provocateur* a single illuminated windsock stands over a copy of Banner's version of *Heart of Darkness*. Its beam is a search-light attempting to focus on the book, while an intermittent current of air agitates the pages.

P.T.O.

A found 19th Century baptismal font partially obstructs the entrance/exit to the gallery. Engraved with the word 'font' it creates a playful slippage between naming, language and object/image; a recurrent theme in Banner's work.

Fiona Banner was born in Merseyside in 1966. She studied at Kingston Polytechnic and Goldsmith's College London. Her exhibition *Scroll Down And Keep Scrolling* runs at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham 10 October 2015 - 17 January 2016. This exhibition is accompanied by a major new artist's book of the same title.

Heart of Darkness has been co-published by Banner's imprint The Vanity Press and Four Corners Books. This publication has its origins in an invitation to create a show of works drawn from the Archive of Modern Conflict, a major collection of photographs and ephemera relating to war and conflict, in 2012. After researching the archive Banner observed a lack of images relating to here and now. In a reversal of roles she commissioned Paolo Pellegrin, a conflict photographer who has worked extensively in the Congo, to observe the City of London through Conrad's text. A selection of these images now form part of the Archive, and they can be found filed under 'Heart of Darkness, 2014'. These images formed the basis of Banner's exhibition, *Mistah Kurtz - He Not Dead at Peer*, London in 2014.

Banner first referenced *Heart of Darkness* in her work 'Apocalypse Now', 1996 - this was based on the Coppola film of the same name which used the novel as its narrative framework. She returned to *Heart of Darkness* in her first artist's book *THE NAM*, 1997. In 2012 Banner used Orson Welles' little known screenplay for *Heart of Darkness* as the basis for a single performance in which the actor Brian Cox read the entire script to a camera broadcasting live to the Queen Elizabeth Hall at London's South Bank Centre.

The Type-face *Font* was developed in collaboration with Fraser Muggeridge Studio and will be available to download on www.fionabanner.com from 17 September.

For further information please contact: press@frithstreetgallery.com